



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH  
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December 10, 2003

**TO:** Washington State Board of Health Members  
**FROM:** Craig McLaughlin, Board Staff  
**RE:** **NATIONAL SURVEY OF STATE BOARDS OF HEALTH**

**Background and Summary**

In 2002 and 2003, the Washington State Board of Health (WSBOH) conducted a nationwide survey to assess the number and types of state boards of health in an effort to put its own work in a national context. Staff members working on the survey considered national and state performance standards under development and how they might apply to state boards of health. They also reviewed the draft of a model public health act to consider how it addressed the role of state boards. The lead staff member was Doreen Garcia; intern Kimberly Moore and I assisted her.

We identified state health boards or councils meeting the study criteria in 30 states. Of these, 22 (73%) make policy and provide advice. Eight (27%) are advisory only. Of the 22 boards with policy-making authority, eight (36%) oversee or direct the state health agency. There was a net loss of two qualifying state boards and councils nationwide between 1991 and June 30, 2003. If one considers the powers and duties of state boards of health as a continuum—with boards that have direct oversight of the statewide public health system on one end and boards that are strictly advisory to the executive officer of the state health agency on the other—WSBOH appears to fall somewhere in the middle of the continuum.

At its July 9, 2003 meeting, the Board had a chance to review and comment on a draft of the report that summarized the results of the survey. Doreen Garcia provided an overview of the report and Board members suggested changes at that time. Today's packets contain a proposed final draft of the full report. This version incorporates suggestions by Board members and has been through another round of review by representatives of other states. It also incorporates information from a Turning Point study on state health agencies that includes data about state public health governance structures, including state boards and councils.

**Recommended Board Action**

I recommend the Board consider the following motion:

***The Board adopts the report Washington State Board of Health Nationwide Survey of State Boards of Health as submitted December 10, 2003.***

Washington State Board of Health

July 9, 2003

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Attachment